



Emergency Management MESSENGER

John Elias Baldacci, Governor
Maj. Gen. Joseph E. Tinkham II,
Commissioner
Arthur W. Cleaves, Director

News for Maine Emergency Management Officials

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FROM THE DIRECTOR N

by Art Cleaves

Emergency Managers across the State continue to deal with a myriad of activities including response to winter storms, preparedness and preventive measures for potential terrorist acts, as well as closely coordinating public health training events.

This winter, York County experienced a severe winter storm that caused over \$700,000 in damages along the coastline, almost qualifying for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). On the extreme other end of the State, Aroostook County received a record snowfall followed by three days of intense winds that closed roads for extended periods. Governor Baldacci requested assistance from FEMA and Maine was granted a Federal declaration for a snowstorm emergency for Aroostook County.

Because Maine's winter was colder than normal (the 10th coldest on record), the frost sank much deeper than normal causing breaks in water mains and sewer lines of a magnitude we have never seen before. Assessments conducted to date have revealed much more damage in communities than originally anticipated.

The River Flow Advisory Commission met twice in March and warned the public to be aware of the potential for ice jam flooding. Again, the State remained unseasonably cold in Southern Maine, with ice covering all major rivers much later than is normal. Any quick melting or above normal precipitation could trigger ice movement which could result in ice jamming. At this date, April 14, so far, so good. With over one-half of the State still well frozen, the danger could remain for another two weeks.

Last month, Standish, Maine was the epicenter for a very minor earthquake. Just a friendly reminder that earthquakes are possible in Maine and that emergency planners can't simply dismiss the possibility.

Maine received over \$400,000 from the Supplemental 2002 Emergency Planning Initiative. Most county directors have contracted with a State Planning Team from the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (DVEM) to complete all-hazard planning for their major communities. The team is headed up by Colonel (Retired) Fred Umphrey

and includes a local director as well as a principal of a school, which provides a good cross-section of planning experience.

The Citizen Corps initiative has taken off in earnest with the formation of a State Council. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training has been conducted at several locations. I know this initiative will bring out a new group of volunteers from organizations not previously involved with emergency response.

The Homeland Security Office has raised the threat level to High (Orange) risk of terrorist attack at the outset of the Iraqi War. This action created a significant preparedness response in most large municipalities, along the coast, and at our border crossings.

All these activities point out that public officials and emergency managers must be prepared to respond to a variety of hazards. All Hazard planning is the real key.

Understanding the potential hazards—be it a winter storm, hurricane, chemical spill, or even a more unlikely terrorist act—planning, and exercising with all responders is the best way to be prepared. Educating and involving our public officials remains the biggest challenge.

The commitment from Governor Baldacci to Emergency Management and the public's safety is a great example for public officials statewide. He demonstrated his concern by making emergency management a priority during his transition and continues to be totally involved in public safety matters.

County News

Somerset County—Bob Higgins, Sr. was appointed EMA Director by the Somerset County Commissioners on Jan. 27. Bob comes to the EMA position following a thirty-five year military career in the Army National Guard. He retired from an active duty position of being a combat engineer with the rank of Sergeant Major. In addition, he has a long background of emergency response jobs: He was a member of the Denny's River Fire Department, a policeman in Old Town, and served as a Patrol Sergeant in the Washington County Sheriff's Department. Bob resigned as the Sheriff of Washington County during the Cold War Period in 1983 for an Active Duty Tour with the Army National Guard. Bob has hit the ground running in his new position. Give him a call at 207-474-6788 and welcome him to the EMA family.—**The Editor**



Bob Higgins, Sr.

Aroostook County—WINTER STORM SLAMS AROOSTOOK COUNTY Aroostook County residents hadn't recovered from a blizzard that hit on February 2 and 3 before receiving more snow on the 4th of February. The tremendous amount of fallen snow, coupled with high winds, made for dangerous conditions, forcing some municipalities to prioritize snow removal on roadways. This caused many roads to remain closed for a period of time. Many public works departments worked around the clock to help clear the roads of drifting snow to make travel safe for its citizens. Many communities will proceed with snow removal well into the following week. The first storm, a blizzard, dumped more than thirty inches of snow in some areas of the St. John Valley; this, coupled with blizzard winds, actually moved snow from fields to voids, with drifts of up to six feet high across some roadways. During the height of the storm, all Aroostook County schools were closed, as well as Courts, State, County, and Local Government departments, and many commercial entities.

Because of the nature of the storm, **Governor John E. Baldacci** decided to submit to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) a

request for assistance following the guidance of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. In a written statement to **Daniel Craig**, Regional Director for FEMA Region 1, **Governor Baldacci** states, "Pursuant to 44 CFR 206.35, I have determined that the impact of these winter storms is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary to save lives, protect property, public health, and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a disaster. I am specifically requesting snowstorm response and snow removal assistance for the State and affected counties and municipalities and assistance to support extraordinary actions taken to maintain public health and safety."

Aroostook County municipalities are eagerly awaiting the decision for assistance. As communities are being forced to deal with limited funds, a storm of this magnitude certainly places a huge undue burden on many communities.—**Vernon Ouellette, AKEMA Director**

[Editor's note: The snow declaration for Aroostook County, FEMA #3174-EM-ME, was granted by the President on March 11. Today we have sixty-two applicants which will be receiving federal assistance. Checks will start going out next week.]

**West Nile Virus:
TO REPORT A
DEAD BIRD
CALL THE MAINE
BUREAU OF HEALTH
1-800-697-5846**



State Conducts Regional CERT Train-the-Trainer

by Michael Grant, MEMA Training Officer

The State conducted the first in a series of Train-the-Trainers that will be conducted region-wide in promotion of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program initiated by FEMA.

CERT is a part of the CitizenCorps initiative which gives volunteers in communities an opportunity to serve the community in some way or to support the local emergency responders during a major disaster or event.

The course was held in Rockland in conjunction with Knox and Waldo County Emergency Management Agencies. **Mike Grant** of MEMA served as lead instructor supported by **Bob Bohlmann** of York County EMA who also serves as the State CERT representative. Twenty-six students from throughout the State participated.

A highlight of the program was a one-day session on first aid and CPR which was conducted by the local Red Cross chapter. The training can substitute for the emergency medical modules of the course and gives students Citizen First Aid certification. Each participant also received a pocket CPR mask as a show of appreciation for their efforts.

Also on hand was **Jeanine Lee** of the Waldo County CitizenCorp group. She discussed the overall initiatives of CitizenCorp and how CERT integrates into that system. Waldo County has several communities which have already organized and have expressed interest in the program. It is envisioned MEMA will use that interest to form a model program which other communities in the State can follow.



14th Annual Hazardous Materials Conference & 4th Annual HAZMAT Team Challenge

by Dawn C. Cormier,
MEMA Planning & Research Assistant

The 14th Annual Hazardous Materials Conference will be held May 28 & 29, 2003 at the United Technical Center, on the Hogan Road in Bangor. This Conference is for the planning, responder, and industrial communities that deal with hazardous materials. There will be various educational breakout sessions pertaining to these different hazardous material communities. Sessions will be led by professionals from FEMA, US EPA, Maine DEP, MEMA, and various other presenters.

On the second day of the conference the 4th Annual Hazmat Team Challenge will be held in conjunction with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection which is co-sponsoring the challenge with MEMA. State-wide HAZMAT teams will compete to find out which team is the "best," by completing a written exam and doing various exercises dressed out in level "A" suits. Last year's winner was International Paper Bucksport. Who will it be this year?

Peter Retires

After a long and distinguished career as the Androscoggin County Emergency Management Director, Peter Van Gagnon is retiring in May of this year. Gene Maxim of MEMA interviewed Peter for this article.

GM: What led you to work in the emergency management field? Was it an accident?

PETER: Well, it's more of a process and a career ladder now. It wasn't a career back when I started. I had planned on being a teacher but after two years in college I knew I was going to be drafted because of Vietnam, so I joined the Marines. On discharge I planned to go back to college so I could be a teacher, but I needed money to do that. I saw an ad in the paper for an Assistant Plans and Training Officer with Civil Defense and Public Safety and applied for it and was hired. That was in October 1965. I planned on taking this job temporarily and it turned into a career! Back then the law required that I be tested for this job under the existing system. Since the County didn't have a Civil Service testing system of its own I had to test under the State system, and if I didn't pass I wouldn't have been able to keep that job! I moved up to a full Plans and Training Officer in 1970 and I became the Androscoggin EMA Director in September of 1977.

GM: What was the worst disaster you had to manage in your career?

PETER: Probably the 1987 flood.

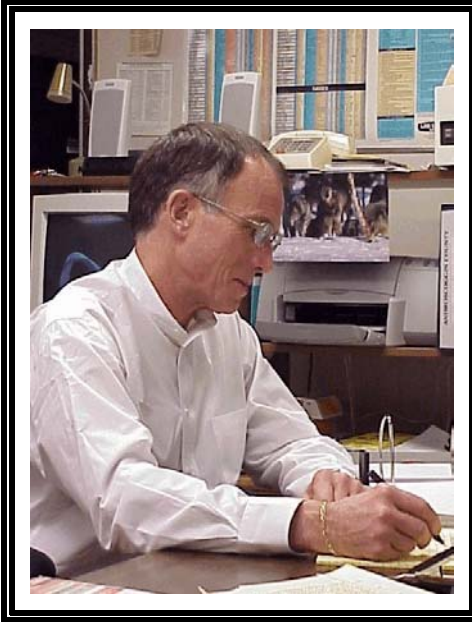
GM: Which disaster was the most interesting or challenging?

PETER: The ice storm of 1998 was the most challenging. There were too many people looking for something for nothing. Many people were taking advantage of the help being offered but they weren't doing this in a responsible way.

GM: Since you began working in emergency management, have you seen changes in the way disasters are managed?

PETER: When I started there wasn't the Stafford Act, and now that's the basis for so much of our disaster management and recovery efforts. There is more recognition of the importance of emergency management as a career now. There is more training being offered and there are

college courses and degrees in emergency management being offered.



GM: In your opinion, what changes still need to be made?

PETER: A disconnect exists between emergency management and elected officials, and that can occur at all levels. Some of the elected officials do not understand what their responsibilities are in terms of protection of the populace and disaster prevention measures.

GM: Did you accomplish all that you wanted to in your emergency management career?

PETER: There are three accomplishments that I am especially proud of. Androscoggin EMA was involved in the early stages of planning for the 911 system and helped facilitate that process. So that's one.

The Tri-county EMS system was started in 1973 through the efforts of Androscoggin EMA. At that time I was an approved EMT instructor and I taught the second eighty-one hour MDOT EMT course that was given in Maine. The first course was held in South Portland. There wasn't any money back then and I felt strongly about the need for EMT training so I purchased

the \$800 instruction program with my own money. I did get reimbursed for this expense at a later time. I facilitated the coordination and organization for all of the EMT courses in the Tri-county area, and I did the teaching.

We were running two rescue units out of our office, along with taking care of our EMA duties. Eventually Maine received a Federal DOT grant for \$2 million. Then a State EMS office was established and regional EMS coordinators were hired. When that occurred, we moved on to new challenges.

Androscoggin County had the first Local Emergency Planning Committee (February 1987) in the State. It was functioning a year before the State Emergency Response Commission was established!

PETER: You didn't ask me what my greatest failure was.

GM: What was your greatest failure?

PETER: My inability to facilitate the formation of HAZMAT technician team for Androscoggin County within the public safety/private sector. We tried twice to do this, but couldn't make it happen.

GM: What do you think your best memories concerning your career will be?

PETER: The people I met and worked with over the years at all levels of government.

GM: What do you plan to do in the future?

PETER: Anything I want to! I hope to play more, do more running, canoeing, and kayaking. My wife is retiring also, so we'll play together. My wife has a long "honeymoon" list too. We'll be spending some time at two camps that have been in our family for three generations, and we'll probably take a trip someplace once a year. I have never had a problem with a lack of things to do to get me up in the morning and keep me busy!

County News (cont'd)

Kennebec County—The staff at Kennebec County EMA was very busy dealing with the Kennebec River during the month of March. Ice movement created several concerns over a two-week period. On Sunday, March 23, 2003 1:52 p.m.; ice sensors placed in Sidney by the town boat launch reported movement. The sensors consist of a box with battery and solar power that attach a length of cable to an electronic box that generates a phone call to EMA and public safety when pulled out. The other end of the cable is screwed in to the ice with 25 feet of slack, when the ice moves far enough a call (taped message) reporting movement is made. The EMA staff responded to verify and assess any potential danger. A section of approximately 300 yards of chunk and frazzle ice (slush) were discovered in Sidney with good water flow around and under. This presented no immediate threat but heightened our state of alert.



Sightseer parked at the Augusta Public Boat Launch.

Cerasuolo, County Director discovered a large ice jam had situated itself between the Father Curran Bridge and the Memorial Bridge in Augusta. The jam had moved in less than forty-five minutes, quickly impeded the river flow, and caused the water level to begin rising very fast. As the water level reached within three feet of flood stage, high tide was just two hours away. The EMA activated its flood plan. Each public safety agency and municipal office in the flood zone was notified and kept informed throughout the day. The river level reached within nine inches of flood stage and ice was seen piling into some parking areas with no damage reported.

During a check of the river at approximately 1:30 p.m. the EMA staff became aware of a distraught individual who had made his way out to the middle of the river and refused to come into shore. This man was not aware of the extreme danger he put himself and subsequently several Augusta Firefighters into. The situation required a full ice/cold-water rescue response from the Augusta Fire and Police Departments. The challenge was to use a watercraft to gain access to the individual and rescue someone who did not want to be rescued. The Kennebec County Sheriff's Department offered the assistance of their dive team and inflatable boat. It was determined that the

On Wednesday, March 26, 2003, ice sensors again reported movement but this time in the Augusta Area. **Mark Belserene**, Deputy EMA Director, was paged and responded at 6:30 a.m. to find only a small area of ice movement, which contained the cable that pulls from the sensor and triggers the call to public safety. At approximately 7:30 a.m. **Vincent**



East bank of the Kennebec River in Augusta.

boat couldn't be used because the ice was too dangerous. The EMA suggested using the United States Geological Survey (USGS) hovercraft, which had been in the area for testing ice samples. The USGS staff dropped what they were doing and responded as did the rescue air boat from the Town of Jefferson. No matter what watercraft was available it was just too dangerous for rescuers to attempt to use them. After almost an hour of verbal communication and negotiation with an Augusta police officer the distraught man made a deal to come off the ice for a cigarette. The deal was carried out by an Augusta firefighter who maneuvered closer to the man and threw him a life jacket, life line, and, of course, the cigarette. The man made it off the ice safely and was transported to the hospital for evaluation. It was not more than thirty minutes later that the ice made a huge shift and the entire area where this man was standing was nothing but open water. Over the next thirty-six hours the ice dissipated slowly with good flow and no further incidents.—**Mark Belserene, Deputy Director KCEMA**

April 2003

Maine Funds Library of Geospatial Information

State of Maine

Summary: Last year, the people of Maine and their political representatives all voted “yes” to create and fund an initiative designed to provide geospatial information and tools that can be used for a wide range of preparedness applications for emergency planners and first responders throughout the State. Through an outreach and public education effort, project developers were able to overcome legislative and funding challenges.

One of the most important libraries in Maine contains no books. An electronic compendium of geospatial information, the Maine GeoLibrary is designed to support disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery throughout the State by making precision geographic information available to emergency responders and the general public. The library has numerous applications for emergency preparedness, for example:

- Providing detailed information on terrain elevation, roadways, and watercourses to assist emergency responders during a flood disaster;
- Geo-coding outbreaks of a bio-event such as anthrax on a map, allowing public health officials to monitor disease trends, facilitate containment, and possibly pinpoint the disease origin; and
- Providing precise geographic information about a chemical spill to facilitate the lockdown of perimeters and establishment of evacuation routes.

The Maine GeoLibrary project was approved and funded partly because of the effort project managers put into explaining the need for such a complex and technical initiative to members of the public and their state representatives. By focusing on key legislative committees, project promoters were able to advance a project that would contribute substantially to emergency preparedness in the State. The project team was able to demonstrate that the GeoLibrary was not just a technological tool for experts but also useful to the public at large. In 2002, the team’s efforts paid off. The legislature passed the bill creating the library and an oversight board. After that, residents voted overwhelming for the project in a state bond referendum in November.

Building upon the GeoLibrary foundation, the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont are involved in an effort to build a Regional Incident Management System that will allow emergency officials to track and manage disasters and bioterrorism attacks on a region-wide level. Authorized individuals would be able to enter data in a secure online form to allow a real-time, interactive perspective on the threat.

“This initiative will bring all levels into view in one EOC,” said Dan Walters of the Maine Chief Information Officer’s office. “There will be one geographic view to allow officials to visually understand what is going on. That’s critical for preparedness.”

To submit a ‘Smart Practice’ for consideration or subscribe to Smart Practices Spotlight send an e-mail to SmartPractices@fema.gov

Smart Practices Spotlight highlights practices and ideas that members of the emergency management and responder community have found useful and effective; they are not necessarily advocated or endorsed by FEMA. For more information about the Maine GeoLibrary initiative, contact Dan Walters at 207-624-9435 or dan.walters@maine.gov.

Better Business Bureaus Issue National Consumer Alert:

SCAM ARTISTS ARE USING WAR IN IRAQ TO GENERATE INTEREST IN THEIR SCHEMES

Arlington, VA., April 8, 2003 – As Operation Iraqi Freedom dominates the headlines, Better Business Bureaus (BBBs) report that scam artists are playing to people's patriotism and preying on heightened concerns about homeland security to peddle their wares.

"It's unfortunate to think that citizens are the target of scam artists even during time of war. BBB experience shows, however, that fraud perpetrators pick newsworthy events to trigger interest in their marketing ploys," said Ken Hunter, president and CEO of the Council of Better Business Bureaus.

To date, BBBs have identified three types of war-related pitches being used by legitimate organizations, as well as less reputable merchandisers: (1) pleas for funds to help victims of the war or those fighting in the war, (2) appeals to patriotism and claims of government affiliation or approval, and (3) promotions that hype up fear and panic.

"In times of prosperity or poverty, when we're at peace or at war, BBB advice is constant: Be a Savvy Shopper and a Discerning Donor," Hunter said.

BBBs urge consumers to:

- Check out any unknown business or not-for-profit organization that seeks your money or donation with the BBB and local consumer protection agency.
- Carefully verify any claims that sound "too good to be true."
- Do not panic or overreact to sales pitches that are long on emotion and short on details.
- Never reveal personal or financial information to an unknown caller or in response to an unsolicited email.
- Do not succumb to sales pressure. Take your time to evaluate the offer, determine whether you need the product or service, and if so, comparison-shop.
- Do not abandon your common sense!

New Faces at MEMA



**Jon Austin,
Hazardous Materials
Office**



**Fred Umphrey,
County/Local
Planning Team**



**Zeb Murray,
County/Local
Planning Team**



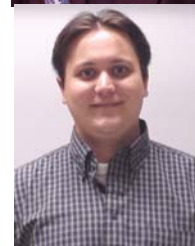
**Rusty Robertson,
County/Local
Planning Team**



**Randy Rolfe,
County/Local
Planning Team**



**JoAnn Mooney,
Dam Safety Program**



**Bruce Fitzgerald,
Hazard Mitigation
Program**



**Andy Mendes,
American Red
Cross**



**We
Want
to HEAR
from YOU!**

This newsletter was produced by the Maine Emergency Management Agency. We welcome your comments and recommendations regarding its content. Please send contributions, ideas, and questions by June 11 to:

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FAX 207-626-4499

<http://www.state.me.us/mema>

PLEASE NOTE: Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

May 1, **Dam Safety Seminar**, York County EOC, Alfred

May 5, **NOAA Hurricane-Hunter Plane Public Viewing**, Portland Jetport, Portland 2:30–4:30 p.m.

May 7, **Dispatcher Training WMD**, by the Maine Assoc. of Dispatcher Coordinators, State EOC, Augusta 9 a.m.

May 21–22, **Emergency Planning Course**, State EOC, Augusta

May 28–29, **14th Annual Hazardous Materials Conference**, Bangor High School United Technical Center, Hogan Road, Bangor

June 4–5, **Volunteer Resources Course**, State EOC, Augusta

June 18–19, **Donations Management Course**, State EOC, Augusta

NOTE: Contact your County EMA Director for further information.

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